

The Newsroom: Reporting Essentials for Today's Journalist

MJCOM 9201B
Winter 2023

Instructor: Jennifer O'Brien
jobrie62@uwo.ca
519-614-1181

Information: Thursdays 1:30-4:20 p.m. // FNB 3050
Class is in-person. Will pivot to Zoom (via OWL) if needed.
Office hours by appointment

I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

Course description

This practical course is designed as nuts-and-bolts training to prepare and equip future reporters for a career in journalism. Through practical activities and newsroom-style story assignments, this course aims to help build essential skills. Students will gain experience and produce multiple stories that can be used in a portfolio to catch the attention of future employers in journalism- and communications-related fields.

Learning outcomes

The objective is to ensure that students learn — through practice — how to:

1. Think, ask questions and produce stories like a journalist
2. Come up with strong local stories that ought to be told
3. Pitch stories to editors and producers — both in newsrooms and as freelancers
4. Find appropriate people to interview, while considering a diversity of perspectives and seeking out a diversity of voices
5. Plan and conduct effective interviews for public storytelling in an ethical and culturally sensitive manner
6. Gather, evaluate, and integrate information from a broad and diverse range of sources with a critical approach.
7. Meet tight deadlines
8. Work with editors to incorporate constructive feedback on pitches and stories
9. Think critically about issues and challenge dominant sources/forms of knowledge to identify what they include and exclude.
10. Package stories in a multi-platform digital environment

Course Schedule

Please see below for assignment breakdown. You will be provided with a detailed lesson and assignment schedule on the class OWL website.

Course Materials

You should all have access to CP Caps and Spelling and CP Stylebook online through Western. For the most part, you will be expected to follow CP style.

You are required to remain up to date on local, national and international news and timely issues by following major and independent media outlets and accounts.

While there is no required reading for this course, there will be a living list of assigned articles, podcasts and books posted to our OWL site. In the meantime, read journalism and also seek out and read books and articles about journalism and by journalists.

Lessons and assignments

<u>Week</u>	<u>Lesson & assignment</u>
Week 1 Jan. 12	Intro class: We'll talk about the course and go through the syllabus and expectations No assignment but we will do an in-class activity on clear writing
Week 2 Jan. 19	1) How to find stories and the people you need to help you tell them 2) How to fine-tune ideas and pitch them to editors <u>Assignment #1:</u> Field story, due next day, Jan. 20 at 5 p.m. — 10%
Week 3 Jan. 26	1) How to write for news: The digital checklist you need to succeed 2) How to write headlines and package your stories <u>Assignment #2:</u> News story pitch, due at Feb 3 story meeting — 5%
Week 4 Feb. 2	1) Story Meeting: bring your pitches 2) How to do great interviews: spokespeople, sources and strangers <u>Assignment #3:</u> Field Story – Streeter, due next day, Feb. 3 at 5 p.m. — 10%

<p>Week 5 Feb. 9</p>	<p>1) How to make sure your stories include the people they affect 2) How to report responsibly on Indigenous communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A guest speaker will join us for this class
<p>Week 6. Feb. 16</p>	<p>In-class scenario: <u>Assignment #4.</u> same day (no prep necessary) — 10%</p>
<p>Week 7 Feb. 23</p>	<p>READING WEEK • READING WEEK • READING WEEK • READING WEEK</p>
<p>Week 8 March 2</p>	<p><u>Assignment #5:</u> Story pitch, due today at meeting — 5%</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Story Meeting: bring your pitches 3) How to cover breaking news and live events <p><u>Assignment #3:</u> Live-tweet a news event, due in real time — 10%</p>
<p>Week 9 March 9</p>	<p>1) How to cover common local reporting beats Police, courts and city hall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speaker will join us <p><u>Assignment #6:</u> Field story, due next day, March 10 at 5 p.m. — 10%</p>
<p>Week 10 March 16</p>	<p>In-class scenario: <u>Assignment #7,</u> due same day (no prep necessary) — 10%</p>
<p>Week 11 March 23</p>	<p>MMJC Newsroom Days This week we will be running a digital news organization on a daily deadline — 20%</p>
<p>Week 12 March 30</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Trauma-Informed reporting and how to cover difficult topics respectfully and professionally (and cope with public criticism) 2) How to write a profile <p><u>Assignment #8:</u> Field story, due Wednesday, March 30 — 10%</p>

Week 13 April 6	Investigative reporting: How to get stories using the Freedom of Information (FOI) laws. Learn how and when to file FOI requests.
Week 14 April 13	Last class! Fun, food and talking more about journalism.
Class participation	<u>10%</u>

**Assignment due dates may change as course progresses. I will announce changes in class and post to OWL.*

***Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Master of Media in Journalism and Communication program**

Class Attendance

Class attendance and engagement will help form the participation mark. Presentation of material will happen in class and, therefore, it is crucial to attend each class to learn the material.

If you are unable to attend a class, please contact your instructor (Jennifer) at jobrie62@uwo.ca or 519-614-1181

Class recordings

Zoom classes may be recorded for students to use as reference. If a session is to be recorded, advance notice will be given. Please contact the instructor, Jennifer O'Brien if you have any concerns related to session recordings

Deadlines

Deadlines must be met unless there is a compelling reason to extend. You must seek out instructor **approval at least 24 hours in advance** of the deadline.

Scholastic Offences

Members of the University Community accept a commitment to maintain and uphold the purposes of the University and, in particular, its standards of scholarship. It follows, therefore, that acts of a nature that prejudice the academic standards of the University are offences subject to discipline.

Any form of academic dishonesty that undermines the evaluation process, also undermines the integrity of the University's degrees. The University will take all appropriate measures to promote academic integrity and deal appropriately with scholastic offences.

Please read the following

policy: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Accessible Education Western (AEW):

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.